

Annual Report  
New York State Rural Housing Coalition, Inc.  
2017-18 Program Year



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*From the desk of the Acting Executive Director*

Our 2017-18 year at the Coalition was filled with change, and planning for more change. One of the biggest changes in the offing is that the Board of Directors is moving forward with plans to hire a permanent Executive Director to lead the Coalition through new opportunities. Presumably, that means that this message is the last time that I will be writing to you in the capacity of Acting ED. When the help wanted ad for the Executive Director position was released, my inbox was flooded with messages of concern, as well as some best wishes on my retirement. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the reports of my departure are an exaggeration. I do not plan on going anywhere but back to my title as Deputy Director of the Coalition. I have too much fun working with all of you to even think of leaving the Coalition.

Other changes of note during this year- we have worked with a surprising number of new Executive Directors in the Rural Preservation Program network, providing orientation to the program, along with other support services. Leadership transitions are always a critical time for non-profit organizations, and we view extra support as a wise investment in maintaining organizational stability.

Last year, we welcomed two VISTA volunteers to our training conference in Oswego. The VISTA volunteers had been placed with RPCs under a statewide project that we organized. That VISTA initiative was completed in the Spring of 2018, and both volunteers achieved remarkable outcomes on behalf of their host organizations.

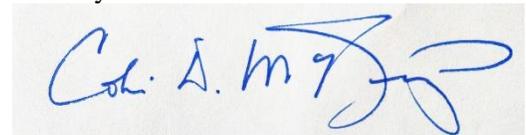
Speaking of the annual Conference, we finished up our fourth year of holding our biggest training event in Oswego, at the Lake Ontario Conference Center. While we loved that location, the facility and the staff, we decamped to Liverpool for the 2018 event in search of more space. We are already seeing the impact of that change, with a larger array of workshops on the agenda, with the hope that the Conference will attract a broader audience.

We supplemented the training conference with our series of regional trainings for RPCs during the spring. We have always found the peer sharing that happens at the regional trainings to be inspirational, and this year was no exception. In addition, our board of directors formed a Communications Committee this year to help us expand our use of social media as an information sharing platform. We set up several Facebook pages for this purpose, and I can unequivocally state that the sites have generated a healthy volume of traffic, that promises to grow as the sites mature.

One of the less-talked-about roles of the Coalition is providing representation of your interests and concerns at state and regional convenings. For instance, Lorraine Charboneau represents the Coalition on an advisory committee that arose out of the merger of First Niagara with Key Bank. I serve on the Community Advisory Committee of the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York, where I am beginning my second term. These opportunities to discuss housing policy are important, for we have meaningful conversations about how policy and regulatory changes will play at the community or street levels. I hope that you will continue to share your concerns related to these entities with us, as we need your feedback to properly represent you.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has supported the Coalition over the past 39 years for their remarkable commitment to this organization. As I am writing this, the announcement of the donation we are receiving from AirBnB, Inc. has been made public. While this donation happened after the close of the 2017-18 year, the donation DID happen thanks to the long and productive history of this organization, and also is clearly a recognition of the achievements of all of our partners and friends. As we start our 40<sup>th</sup> year, please help us toast a great legacy, and a bright future!

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Col. A. M. J." followed by a stylized flourish.

## HCR Contract:

The State of New York provides a significant portion of our revenue through a contract for technical assistance and training services in support of the Rural Preservation Company network. During this program year, the contract through NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) supported:

### *General Technical Assistance and Training:*

- We provided technical assistance to RPCs on a variety of issues related to housing programs and capital projects during this period. Several RPCs requested assistance with the APR, among other topics. Assistance was provided to ACRHA, Frontier Housing, Ithaca NHS, Oswego HDC, PRIDE of Ticonderoga, RPC Clinton County, ROUSE, RPC, Rural Revitalization Corp., Southern Hills, Southtowns RPC, and Western Catskills. Assistance was also provided to Putnam County Housing, The Valley RPC, Frontier Housing, Cattaraugus Community Action, Rensselaer County Housing Resources, SEPP, Rural Revitalization Corporation, Rockland CDC, and Otsego Rural Housing Alliance.
- Board Trainings: trainings were held for boards of directors during the report period. Staff continues to use technology, including Skype, to make these trainings feasible. During the year, a training was held for the board of RPC of Clinton County, and a strategic/succession planning retreat was held for Southern Hills Preservation Corp.
- New Executive Directors: The RPC Network has experienced a fair amount of leadership turnover in this program year. Orientation sessions were held for new Executive Directors at Pride of Ticonderoga, Putnam County Housing Corporation, Frontier Housing Co., Chautauqua Opportunities

### *Training Activities:*

#### Conference:

The Coalition held RPC trainings within the 2017 Annual Affordable Housing and Community Development Conference, which was held at the Lake Ontario Conference Center in Oswego, NY on September 11th, 12th, and 13th. The relevant trainings held at this event included: State Housing Program Roundtable and Environmental Assessment Unit Roundtable, HCR Program and Project Compliance; a track on Supportive Housing; and a track on Multi-family Housing Development.

### *Peer to Peer Training:*

Each spring, the Coalition brings together staff and board leadership of the RPCs on a regional basis to discuss issues related to affordable housing and share solutions to common local problems. The locations of the trainings are rotated around the regions from year to year, to give host RPCs a chance to showcase some of their exciting work. During the spring of 2018, the Peer to Peer trainings were held in Newburgh, Ballston Spa, Olean, and Auburn. Forty-seven RPC personnel attended the sessions across the state.



We want to thank our 2018 hosts, Joe Czajka at Pattern for Progress, Cheryl Hage-Perez at Vet Help, Stephanie Timblin at Rural Revitalization Corporation, and Erica Ryan at Cayuga County Homsite for their assistance in making the Peer to Peer trainings possible.

#### *Annual Report To The Legislature:*

The Rural Housing Coalition provided four case studies of Rural Preservation Company accomplishments in the prior program year for inclusion in the booklet to be published by NYSHCR and distributed to the NYS Senate and the NYS Assembly. The intent of the case studies is to show the breadth of community impact provided by RPC activities. The case study information collected and provided to HCR included:

- 1) Better Housing for Tompkins County completed Pineview, a workforce housing project near the Del Lago casino to address the utter lack of rental housing in the surrounding rural town. This project began development shortly after the award of the casino license by Governor Cuomo, and provides housing within walking distance of the new casino jobs.
- 2) Orange County Rural Development Advisory Corp. has been dealing with the ongoing foreclosure crisis since 2008. Orange County was one of the hardest-hit upstate counties by the flood of foreclosures, and the caseload remains high.
- 3) The spring flooding of Lake Ontario hit multiple counties hard. Three RPCs were selected to be the lead responders to the crisis to help homeowners repair damaged homes and to strengthen the shoreline to protect from future damage. Bishop Sheen's work to respond quickly to this natural disaster was profiled in this case study.
- 4) In 2017, Western Catskills developed a home ownership academy to provide group training to participants in the agency's mobile home replacement program. This case study explained how the program works to improve the financial knowledge base of mobile and manufactured home owners that are participating in the program.

#### **Contracts:**

We currently have an open consulting assignment with the Housing Trust Fund Corporation. . During the year, this contract supported work in a Main Street Boot Camp, as well as EPA-required Renovation Repair and Painting compliance training for building contractors in underserved areas. The RRP Training task order uses one of our subcontractors. We see a nominal amount of revenue from this task order to cover our invoicing and bookkeeping expenses, but are finding that the provision of this training is having an amazing impact on the delivery of home repair services in some of the more remote communities of the state.

#### **VISTA Program:**

In 2016, the Coalition applied for 10 VISTA volunteer slots in an effort to expand services at RPCs across the state, and to introduce young professionals to careers in the affordable housing and community development field. Our request was approved, but it became exceedingly difficult to recruit candidates in the tight national job market, and ultimately we were only able to place two VISTAs, one at Bishop Sheen in their office in Ontario County, and at RUPCo, in Ulster County. Both VISTA volunteers in our program attended the annual conference. Ulster Savings Bank graciously underwrote the travel expenses for the VISTA volunteer that was based in Kingston.

### Other:

- We participated in an informative training in Oneonta hosted by Bassett Healthcare. The topic was pedestrian-friendly community design. This event underscores the growing relationship between housing, community development and public health.
- Staff of the Coalition serve on the community advisory committee of the Federal Home Loan Bank of NY, representing rural New York interests at the quarterly meetings in New York City.
- Our office experienced some changes during the program year. We sublet surplus office space to another tenant in the building. This helped the landlord to be able to market the newly vacant space as a larger suite. At the same time, the building was being offered for sale.



During the January cold snap, the building's furnace died, and the building froze. Because of concerns related to potential gas leaks, the building received a 24 hour guard from the city fire department. It took over a week to officially get back in the building with heat on, although staff worked from home and in mittens to maintain services to our clients. Once the heat was back on, it turned out that the only damage for the Coalition was to house plants that decorated

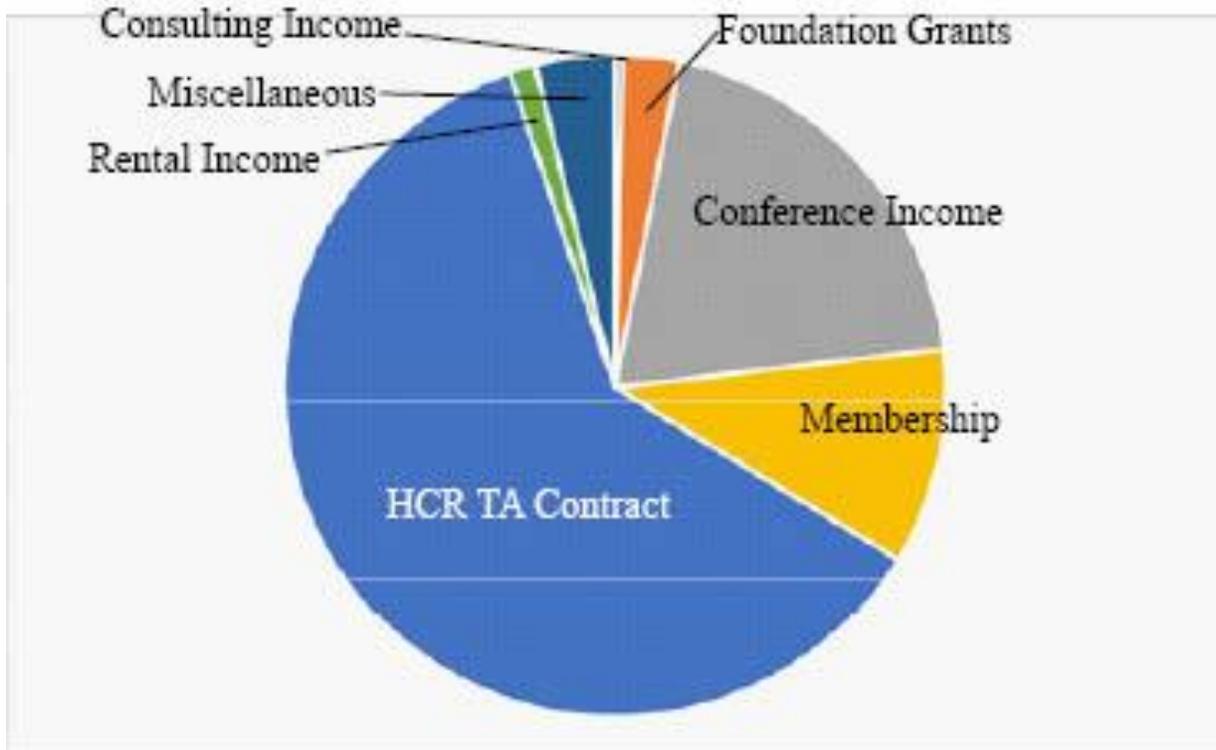
the office. Subsequently, the building was sold to a new landlord.

- We secured pro bono services of two public relations professionals to work with staff on the development of an 'elevator pitch' that concisely describes what the Coalition does in service to rural communities across New York State. These services are provided through a program of American Express, called Taproot+. The consultants have done impressive work, and we hope to roll out the finished product during the autumn of 2018.
- Following up on a series of technology and IT improvements in the Coalition offices last year, we upgraded our phone system this year.
- Rural Delivery: We continue to publish the monthly newsletter of the Coalition, keeping the network up to date on grant deadlines, funding awards, policy shifts, regulatory changes and help wanted notices related to affordable housing and community development. The newsletter is distributed electronically, to a membership list of about 150 recipients.

## Financial Status

The Coalition fiscal year ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The audit for the 2017-18 fiscal year was completed in early August, 2018 by EFPR, and the draft report is scheduled to be delivered to the Board of Directors on September 24<sup>th</sup>. While our unrestricted revenue was down slightly for the year, the expenses likewise declined. The good news is that the staff have maintained strict controls on spending, and the fund balance has grown again this year as a result.

### FY 2017-18 Revenues





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